

44th Meeting of the Standing Committee

3 – 5 March 2009

Introduction by George Okoth-Obbo, Director, Division of International Protection Services of items on Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming and Protection of People with Disability in the oral update on “Global Programmes and Partnerships – Strategic Presentation Summary”

Thank you Mme Chair,
Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good afternoon.

I will introduce very briefly two items that are likewise briefly reported on in the Strategic Presentation Summary you have before you on “Global Programmes and Partnerships”. The first item is on the Office’s Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming” Strategy (AGDM); the second on the Office’s work in protecting its persons of concern living with disabilities.

In regard to AGDM, delegations will know that this is one of the most important institutional policy, programmatic and operational frameworks the Office has established to address this area of its work. Under the overall objective of ensuring gender equality and the enjoyment by persons of concern of their rights, regardless of age, gender and background, AGDM facilitates targeted action to address inequalities and support the empowerment of discriminated groups, in particular women and girls at risk.

The roll-out of the AGDM strategy has since last year been completed in all but 1 of UNHCR’s worldwide operations, a total of 109 in all. In the report we presented to the Standing Committee in June last year on the subject, we highlighted some of the key achievements of the strategy and the challenges we continued to face in driving forward the objectives of AGDM, including a further consolidation in the attitudes, leadership and accountability of, particularly, managerial staff; the importance of co-ordination and partnership with other stakeholders, particularly NGOs; the need for more telling targeted actions; the further institutionalization of the AGDM strategy across the Office, for which a three year ACTION plan has been devised; building up the capacity of the Office; and the proposition that, so as to ensure availability and predictability in the resources required to support the objectives of AGDM, they should be programmed, provided and protected, or firewalled, in a non-negotiable way.

The summary before you highlights three main elements in regard to the continuing work of the Office as concerns AGDM.

- ✚ The first is that, following the report I have just summarised that we provided last year, the AGDM Accountability Framework has now been extended to those programmes in Europe, North America and Asia in which advocacy is the main focus of UNHCR’s work.
- ✚ Secondly, the AGDM strategy has now entered the second phase of its implementation the principal objective of which is to ensure that, through the

AGDM Action Plan, the responsibility for providing support to field operations is even more firmly imbedded across the Organization as a whole. AGDM will continue to be even more fully incorporated in all the key organizational initiatives and undertakings, including the Results Based Management system, Global Needs Assessment (GNA) and the Global Accountability Framework now under development; and will also be promoted through inter-Agency/NGO networks.

- ✚ Finally, the Note highlights an evaluation that is now under way under the auspices of our Evaluation Service of the direct impact of AGDM on persons of concern to the Office, as well as on attitudes, skills, procedures and leadership and work methods of the Office. The views and perspectives of the persons of concern themselves will be directly and actively sought. The preliminary results of the evaluation are expected to be available by the time the 60th Session of the Executive Committee meets in October this year.

As concerns the protection of people living with disability, it will be recalled that in June 2007, UNHCR presented a report before the June Standing Committee outlining the steps the Office was upscaling in regard to the protection of the persons of concern to the Office who live with disability. Those efforts are continuing, including the two issues highlighted in the Note today, namely:

- ✚ A toolkit on disabilities which UNHCR has produced jointly with the Women's Refugee Commission.
- ✚ A specialist, kindly seconded to the Office by Handicap International, dedicated to the Global Protection Cluster Working Group, who has been deployed on support missions to two operations involving internally displaced persons and there provided coaching, training and recommendation on how to improve the protection of people with disabilities.
- ✚ Mental and psychosocial pilot projects which will be launched in certain countries with specific focus on persons of concern who have suffered torture, violence and/or harassment.

Mme Chair, UNHCR has counted on the sustained and strong support of the Member States of this Committee in the weight they have placed behind these two policy priorities and in the financial support that has made the Office's activities possible. We are appreciative of the support and look forward for their continuation.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Thank you Mme Chair.